



Public Information in a WMD/Terrorism Incident

Background: The National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center (NERRTC) of the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) provides the *Public Information in a WMD/Terrorism Incident* training course. This is done either as a part of the Texas Governor's Division of Emergency Management (GDEM) Weapons of Mass Destruction/Terrorism Exercise Program, or as a stand-alone course funded by individual jurisdictions.

Course Overview: This course examines the role of public information in WMD/terrorism incident management and provides practical training in crisis communication techniques. In a WMD/terrorism incident, it is imperative that community leaders, incident managers, and public information officers are prepared to communicate with the public through the news media. The role of public information in WMD/terrorism incident management, the information needs of the public in a crisis, and the various means of effectively communicating through the news media are the focus of this course.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of the course, participants will understand the role of Public Information in a WMD/Terrorism incident, and be prepared to plan and execute public information actions in the event of such an incident. Topics include:

- The nature of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) incidents
- Implications of WMD/terrorism incidents for the public information function
- Conducting emergency public information programs within the framework of the National Incident Management System and the National Response Plan
- Integration of the Joint Information Center with the Incident Command/Unified Command system
- Various methods of communicating with news media and the associated advantages and disadvantages of each
- Message formulation and target audiences
- Frequently asked media questions during a WMD/terrorism emergency
- Constructing effective initial public statements
- Identifying and preparing spokespersons and experts
- Planning and conducting press conferences
- Developing an effective Crisis Communication Plan and Crisis Communication Team
- Communication objectives and action steps for each of the six phases of the crisis communication life cycle

Participant Audience: The course is provided for those men and women within a jurisdiction whose duties may require them to interface with news media representatives during their community's response to a WMD/terrorism incident. Course participants who would benefit

from this training include the jurisdiction's key elected officials, public information officers, key department heads, key public health and medical personnel, and emergency management officials from both the public and private sectors.

Course Length: 12 hours (1 ½ days)

Course Delivery: The Public Information Course is delivered at a time mutually agreed upon by NERRTC and the jurisdiction, and at a location of the jurisdiction's choosing. NERRTC provides instructors and training materials, and the host jurisdiction provides course participants and adequate classroom facilities.

Additional information can be obtained from NERRTC through these individuals.

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